





Habitudes

Cinanti Astria Johansjah (KENI)
Ella Wijt
Meliantha Muliawan
Yosefa Aulia

Writer:
Ibrahim Soetomo

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2024

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The Habits of Our Artists

Every artist has their routine. Let's call this an art habit.

Say we know an artist or a group of artists. We know their works not just from what is visible, but slowly we will grasp their attitude and behavior as an artist, and also as individuals and as social beings. There are habits that will determine the characteristics of the work of artists—for example, their specific medium, their distinctive color scheme, their personal subject matter, etc. There are also habits that settle in the abstract realm, such as how artists formulate their framework, how they tell their story, and how they bring up a question. These habits perhaps made us—as the artist's audience, as a fan, or even as a colleague or a close friend—say with confidence, "I know their work well." Or, perhaps we are enchanted by their unexpected exploration—because the penchant for exploration can also be a habit. An artist needs a habit, and habits will shape back an artist.

Often our exhibitions reduced the meaning of artists' creative processes. An exhibition is commonly held as a seemingly finished presentation, except when it is designed to display works in their progressions—we often called it a work in progress—which now we see more in the line of performance arts. However, if this common form of the exhibition is inevitable, perhaps we can change how we see it and imagine how a work is created: rather than the final result, an exhibition is a part of the life journey of the artist as a human being.

Four of the artists in *Habitudes*—Ella Wijt, Meliantha Muliawan, Cinanti Astria Johansjah (KENI), and Yosefa Aulia—have made their artistic habits. Each of them found and carried on the creative practices that we have known up until now. However, this doesn't mean that they are chained to the coil of the commons. *Habitudes* shows their effort to negotiate and compromise with their existing habits. They explored creative areas that hadn't been touched or fully explored, even though they still held on to a similar idea, and they were open to admitting that their work was still in the study stage. It turned out that, just like in our daily lives, small changes indeed made a significant difference.

Ella Wijt revisited assemblage, a technique she often used around 2018. Ella, who we know liked to paint and attach real flowers on a raw canvas, now presented flowers on a wax mold—their stalks penetrating the gypsum—and stacked them on shells (*I want you series*, 2024). Ella is learning to work with oil paint after using acrylic for years. To Ella, who has a habit of leaving some rooms in the canvas empty—similar to the habit of another artist Rusli (1916-2005), oil paint made her feel that she had to completely fill the canvas, as we could see in *Flames of faith* (2024). Ella's new work in *Habitudes* also marked her return to her studio in Rumah Tangga, Depok, after two years of living in Bandung. Not only learning to familiarise herself with an oil medium, Ella also tuned herself in a past working space.

Yosefa Aulia often painted glass or metal objects with smooth and reflecting surfaces, mushrooms, or even parts of biological organs into a cluster in the middle of the canvas. Yosefa, in her studio routine, also studied oil paint in addition to drawing with pencils and markers. Now, she started focusing on one object in smaller canvases. We can imagine the intensifying focus that Yosefa felt—from working on multiple objects with their various details and now one object with its various physical qualities. And for me, *White Horse and Door Bell* (2024) both are studies about weight and reflection. Pay attention: how do we measure weight and caress the surface of objects in a painting with our own eyes?

Meliantha Muliawan presented a selection of her work spanning from 2014 to 2024. Some of them were never put on display before, and some others came from previous exhibits that she contributed to. In her series *Puzzle Me* (2014), Meliantha presented a series of objects with texts that weren't connected

to each other. In the 3D series *Don't Let Reality Slip Away* (2024), she highlighted the presence of domestic objects, like glasses, ceramic, or clothes—all preserved in resin. In the span of a decade, Meliantha often shifted, transformed, and stacked a collection of objects into a new, often irrational assemblage form—a logic framework she took from the French painter René Magritte (1898–1967). Readers might also notice her habit of storing and preserving objects, be it with resin or smooth, clear acrylic. Other than those purposes, she also wanted to accentuate those objects—making them even more visible.

Cinanti Astria Johansjah, a painter who loves to illustrate her emotional relationship with animals—or an animal lover who made her observations and assumptions through paintings. Cinanti came with the series *Nosco*. She has painted numerous species, but she now focuses on birds. She didn't paint them from afar but painted them in their essence—focusing on how she saw them, along with enchanting splashes of colors. To elevate the essence of her painting, Cinanti also referenced a particular species. We may see a hint of exotism there, which—in the context of biology—is related to the extinction of these wild animals.

If you, as a reader, ever—or, often—go to an artist's studio, which might not be inside a room, you might notice the things that made up the artist's self and work: their sketches, handwritten notes, equipment, books, and also the part of their life that was outside the art world, outside the profession that was imbedded into the air of the studio. Even though it would be fun to see an artist at work, or ask them on-the-spot questions, it was important as well to experience the studio when the artist was not working and let the objects and the atmosphere of the room tell their story. We would find the works that have been put in exhibitions, that would be put in exhibitions, that wouldn't ever be exhibited. And we would understand that a studio was an extension of the artist's mind. And aren't we so lucky that some of the works in *Habitudes* are being exhibited for the first time after living in their studios for who knows how long?

I had the experience of visiting the studios of the four artists in *Habitudes*. I was impressed that the studios of the four artists were only a few feet from their living rooms, or bedrooms, or even the kitchens of the places they lived in. This meant that their studio life was close to their daily life—didn't mean that they had to be die-hard artists. And the works in *Habitudes* were born from and inside these habitats. Except for the works that they have exhibited before, as far as I understand, most of the work in *Habitudes* weren't created for a specific project or commission, therefore representing the genuine artistic lives of the four artists in an almost actual way, if not in a complete way—where the act of making an art was a part of their lives, where they were creating and being created by their habits.







Cinanti Astria Johansjah (KENI)

Nosco no. 7

2024

Acrylic on canvas

50 x 40 cm



Cinanti Astria Johansjah (KENI)

Nosco no. 8

2024

Acrylic on canvas

40 x 30 cm



Cinanti Astria Johansjah (KENI)

Nosco no. 9

2024

Acrylic on canvas

40 x 30 cm



Cinanti Astria Johansjah (KENI)
Nosco no. 10
2024
Acrylic on canvas
40 x 30 cm



Cinanti Astria Johansjah (KENI)

Nosco no. 11

2024

Acrylic on canvas

30 x 20 cm



Cinanti Astria Johansjah (KENI)

Nosco no. 12

2024

Acrylic on canvas

30 x 20 cm



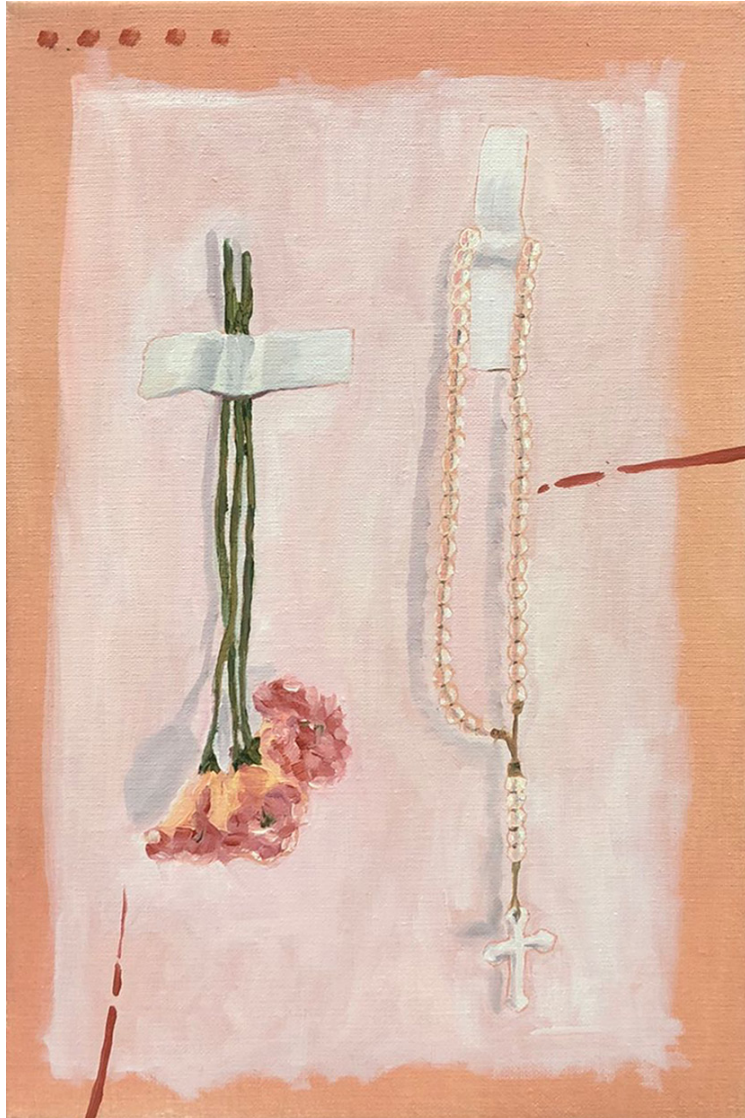
Cinanti Astria Johansjah (KENI)
Nosco no. 13
2024
Acrylic on canvas
30 x 20 cm



Ella Wijt
A piece of us
2024
Watercolor and pencil on paper
14,8 x 21 cm



Ella Wijt
Harvest from the valley
2024
Watercolour and pencil on paper
14,8 x 21 cm



Ella Wijt
Sacred beauty
2024
Oil on canvas
20 x 30 cm



Ella Wijt

I want you (i)

2024

Candle wax, dried lime branch, white plaster casting, seashell and found tile

35 x 15 x 10 cm



Ella Wijt

I want you (ii)

2024

Candle wax, dried lime branch, white plaster casting, seashell and found tile

35 x 15 x 10 cm



Ella Wijt

I want you (iii)

2024

Candle wax, dried lime branch, white plaster casting, seashell and found tile

35 x 15 x 10 cm



Ella Wijt

I want you (iv)

2024

Candle wax, dried lime branch, white plaster casting, seashell and found tile

35 x 15 x 10 cm



Ella Wijt
I want you (v)
2024
Candle wax and dried lime branch
35 x 7 x 5 cm



Ella Wijt
I want you (vi)
2024
Candle wax and dried lime branch
23 x 5 x 4,8 cm



Ella Wijt
I want you (vii)
2024
Candle wax and dried lime branch
27 x 5 x 6 cm



Ella Wijt
 Midday hymn
 2024
 Oil paint, dried rose, and tape on canvas
 d. 30 cm (diptych)



Ella Wijt
The valley
2024
Oil on canvas
20 x 15 cm



Ella Wijt
Flames of faith
2024
Oil on canvas
20 x 30 cm



Ella Wijt
Magic kitty
2024
Oil on canvas
50 x 70 cm



Meliantha Muliawan
Don't let reality slip away #4
2024
Resin, cloth, glass, ceramic, bolt & nut
22 x 28 x 10 cm



Meliantha Muliawan
Don't let reality slip away #5
2024
Resin, cloth, glass, ceramic, bolt & nut
17 x 17 x 7,5 cm



Melantha Muliawan
Don't Let Reality Slip Away #6
2024
Resin, cloth, glass, ceramic, bolt & nut
29 x 22 x 22 cm



Melantha Muliawan
Unburning Bridges #2
2024
Tyvek paper & embroidery in acrylic box
16 x 12 x 7 cm



Melantha Muliawan
Unburning Bridges #3
2024
Tyvek paper & embroidery in acrylic box
16 x 12 x 7 cm



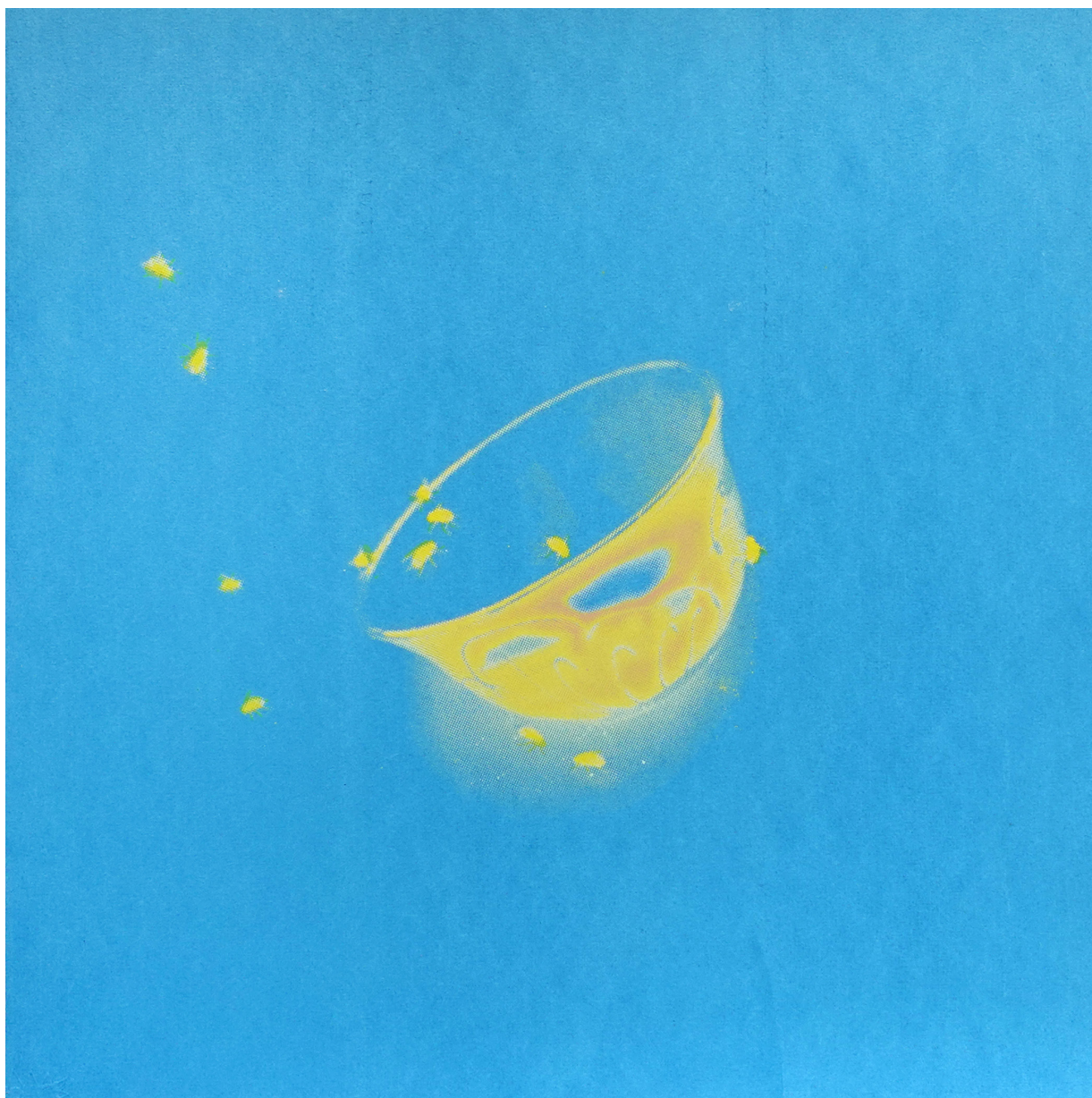
Melantha Muliawan
Unburning Bridges #4
2024
Tyvek paper & embroidery in acrylic box
16 x 12 x 7 cm



Melantha Muliawan
Unburning Bridges #5
2024
Tyvek paper & embroidery in acrylic box
16 x 12 x 7 cm



Melantha Muliawan
Unburning Bridges #6
2024
Tyvek paper & embroidery in acrylic box
16 x 12 x 7 cm

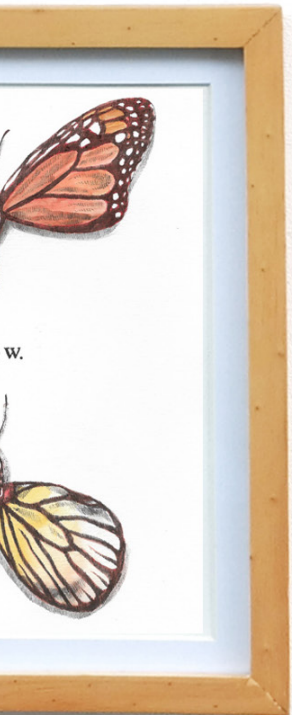


Meliantha Muliawan
Minibeast #1
2023
Silkscreen on Arto 300 gsm
50 x 50cm
(exclude frame)

Ed. 10/10 + 3 AP

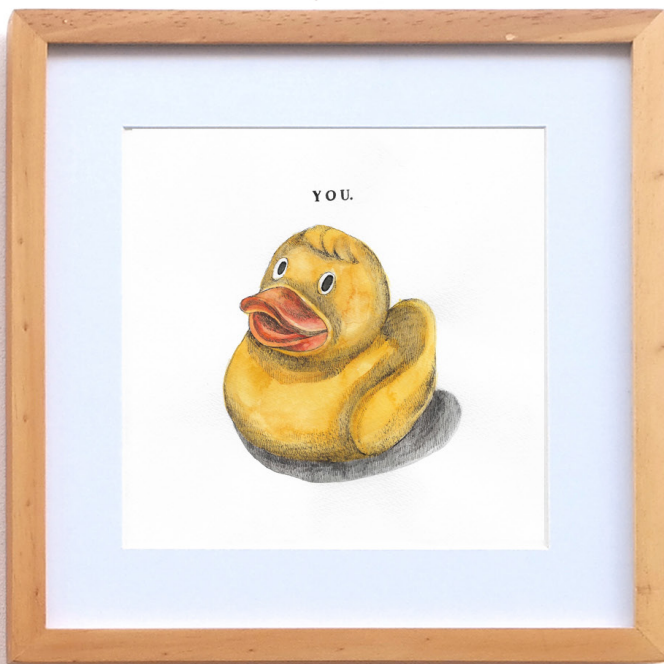


Melantha Muliawan
Puzzle Me #1
2014
Ballpoint & watercolor on paper
95 x 54 cm





Meliantha Muliawan
 Puzzle Me #2
 2014
 Ballpoint & watercolor on paper
 65 x 100cm





Meliantha Muliawan
Desk Bell & Handkerchief
2019
Resin, Desk Bell, Handkerchief & Acrylic Paint
14 x 28 x 28cm



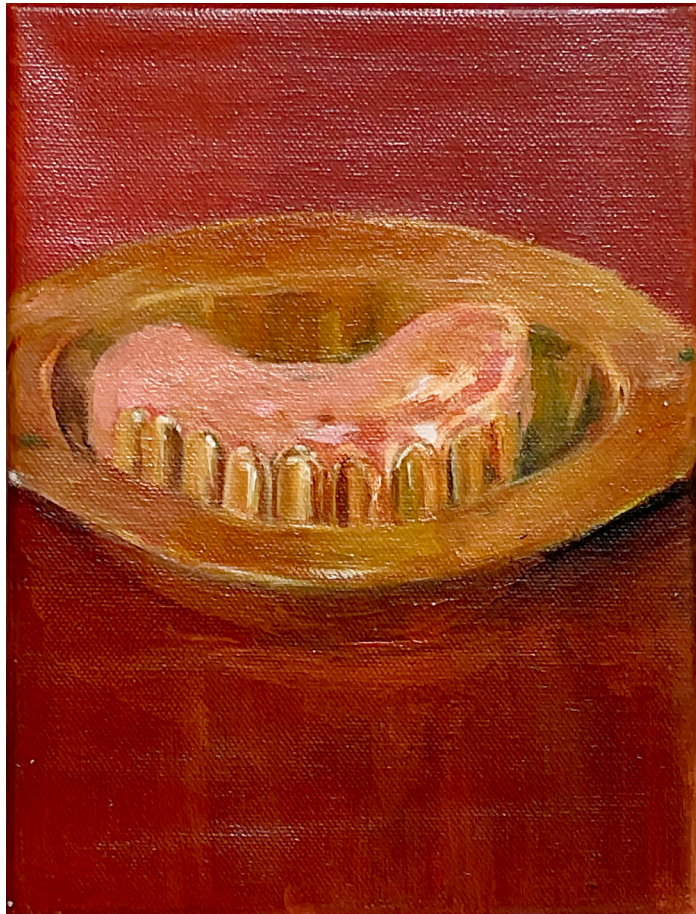
Meliantha Muliawan
No Construction Allowed Holidays #2
2022
Wire, resin, & acrylic paint
45 x 18 x 26 cm



Yosefa Aulia
Paku
2024
Oil on canvas
20 x 30 cm



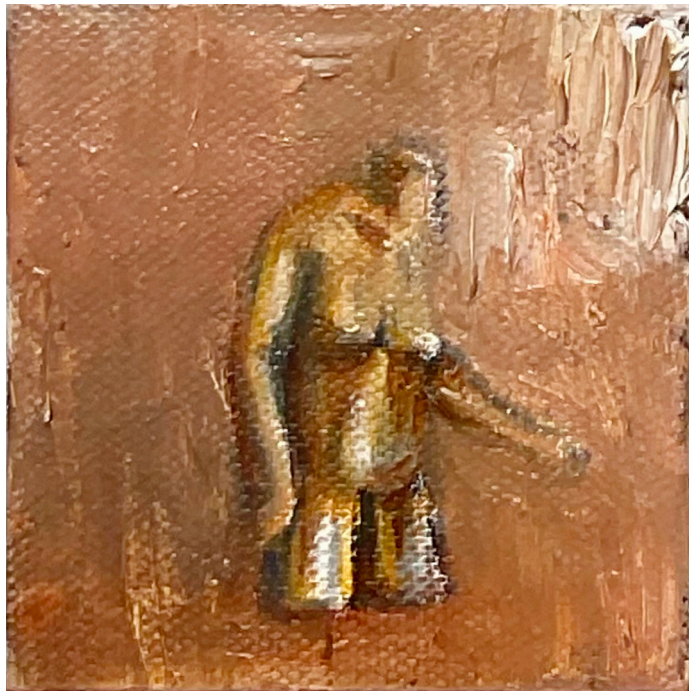
Yosefa Aulia
White horse
2024
Oil on canvas
20 x 25 cm



Yosefa Aulia
Fell off
2024
Pencil and marker on Hahnemuhle paper
15 x 20 cm



Yosefa Aulia
Sambungan belakang
2024
Oil on canvas
15 x 20 cm



Yosefa Aulia
Leher I
2024
Oil on canvas
7,5 x 7,5 cm



Yosefa Aulia
Leher II
2024
Oil on canvas
7,5 x 7,5 cm



Yosefa Aulia
Doorbell
2024
Oil on canvas
15 x 20 cm





Habitus Seniman Kita

Teks Ibrahim Soetomo

Tiap-tiap seniman punya kebiasaan.
Sebut saja itu habitus artistik.

Katakan kita mengenal seorang atau sekelompok seniman. Tak hanya kita mengenal karya-karyanya dari apa yang tampak, kita lambat laun akan memahami perilaku dan sikapnya sebagai seorang pencipta karya, juga sebagai individu dan makhluk sosial. Ada habitus yang menentukan ciri karya seniman itu, misalnya, medium yang spesifik, corak warna yang khas, pokok perupaannya yang mempribadi... banyak lagi. Ada pula kebiasaan yang mengendap di wilayah abstrak, seperti bagaimana seniman merumuskan kerangka berpikir, menurut cerita, atau melontar tanya. Kebiasaan mereka inilah yang membuat kita, sebagai seorang penyimak, penggemar, atau barangkali rekan dan teman karib seniman itu, dapat mengatakan dengan percaya diri, "Aku mengenal karya-karyanya." Atau, boleh jadi kita senantiasa terpukau oleh daya jelajah mereka yang tak terduga—karena kegemaran menjelajah pun dapat menjadi sebuah kebiasaan. Seniman membentuk habitus, dan habitus membentuk kembali seniman.

Seringkali pameran-pameran kita mengurangi makna berproses para seniman. Pameran umumnya hadir sebagai presentasi yang terkesan tuntas, kecuali jika ia memang hendak menampilkan karya dalam masa tumbuhnya, atau biasa kita sebut *a work in progress*, yang juga kian kita lihat di ranah produksi seni pertunjukan. Namun jika bentuk pameran umum itu tak terelakkan, maka barangkali kita bisa mencoba mengubah cara pandang kita padanya, atau mengandaikan bagaimana sebuah karya dapat tercipta: ketimbang hasil akhir, pameran adalah sebuah bagian dari perjalanan hidup seniman sebagai manusia.

Keempat seniman *Habitudes*—Ella Wijt, Meliantha Muliawan, Cinanti Astria Johansjah (KENI), dan Yosefa Aulia—telah membentuk habitus artistiknya. Tiap-tiapnya menemukan dan meneruskan cara berkarya yang kita kenal selama ini, namun bukan berarti mereka terperangkap dalam kumparan kebiasaan. *Habitudes* justru memperlihatkan upaya mereka berunding dan berkompromi dengan kebiasaan-kebiasaan selama ini. Mereka jelajahi kawasan-kawasan mencipta yang belum terjamah atau terkuasai sepenuhnya, meski masih berpijak pada gagasan serupa, dan berani menyatakan bahwa karya itu masih dalam tahap studi. Ternyata, selayaknya dalam kebiasaan kita sehari-hari, perubahan-perubahan kecil mampu membuat perbedaan yang signifikan.

Ella Wijt mengunjungi kembali assemblage, sebuah teknik yang sering ia terapkan pada kitaran 2018. Ia, yang kita kenal gemar melukis maupun melampirkan bunga asli pada permukaan kanvas mentahan, kini menampilkan mawar dalam cetakan-cetakan lilin yang tangkainya menembus gipsum, lalu menumpuknya di atas kerang (seri *I want you*, 2024). Ella juga tengah belajar melukis dengan cat minyak setelah lama menggunakan cat akrilik. Bagi Ella yang terbiasa menyisakan ruang-ruang kosong dalam kanvas, serupa tapi tak sama dengan habitus seniman kita Rusli (1916–2005), cat minyak membuatnya merasa harus terus mengisi bidang, seperti yang tampak pada *Flames of faith* (2024). Karya-karya baru Ella di *Habitudes* juga turut menandai kembalinya ia ke studionya di Rumah Tangga, Depok, setelah kurang lebih 2 tahun bermukim di Bandung. Tak hanya belajar mengakrabkan diri dengan medium berbasis minyak, ia juga menala diri dengan ruang berkarya yang pernah ia huni.

Yosefa Aulia kerap melukiskan objek-objek gelas dan logam berpermukaan licin dan memantul, jamur-jamur, juga potongan-potongan organ tubuh ke dalam satu kluster yang terpusat di tengah-tengah kanvas. Yosefa, dalam rutinitas studionya, juga mempelajari cat minyak selain menggambar dengan pensil dan spidol. Kini, ia juga mulai mengonsentrasikan dirinya ke satu objek dalam bidang kanvas

berukuran relatif lebih kecil. Kita bisa bayangkan intensifikasi fokus melukis Yosefa, yang tadinya tersebar ke berbagai objek dengan bermacam rincinya, kini terpusat pada satu objek dengan berbagai kualitas fisiknya. Dan bagi saya, lukisan *White Horse* dan *Door Bell* (2024) adalah studi tentang bobot dan pantulan. Mari perhatikan: bagaimana kita bisa menimbang berat dan mengelus-elus permukaan objek dalam lukisannya dengan kedua mata kita?

Melantha Muliawan menghadirkan pemilihan karya yang merentang dari 2014 hingga 2024. Sebagian belum pernah ia pameran, sebagian lain berasal dari pameran-pameran yang telah ia ikuti. Pada seri lukisan *Puzzle Me* (2014), Melantha menampilkan sederet objek dengan teks yang tak saling terhubung, lalu pada seri trimatra *Don't Let Reality Slip Away* (2024), ia menyorot hadirnya benda-benda domestik seperti gelas-gelas, keramik, dan kain yang diawetkan dalam resin. Dalam rentang kekaryaannya sepuluh tahun itu, Melantha acapkali mengalih, memalih, dan menumpuk sekumpulan objek menjadi satu wujud assemblage baru yang kerap irasional—suatu tata logika yang ia ambil dari pelukis Prancis René Magritte (1898–1967). Pembaca juga barangkali memperhatikan kebiasaannya menyimpan dan mengawetkan objek, baik ke dalam resin atau akrilik yang mulus dan jernih. Selain dua tujuan itu, ia ingin mengaksentuasi keberadaan objek agar kian tampak.

Cinanti Astria Johansjah, pelukis kita yang gemar mengilustrasikan hubungan emosinya dengan binatang-binatang—atau seorang pemerhati binatang yang mencatat amatan dan andaianannya melalui lukisan-lukisan—menghadirkan seri *Nosco*. Berbagai spesies telah ia lukiskan, namun kini ia fokus pada burung-burung. Ia tak melukis mereka itu dari tampak jauh, melainkan secara esensial dan terpusat pada tatapan, disertai warna-warna bercipratan yang senantiasa memesona. Menambah aspek esensi, Cinanti juga tak merujuk spesies burung tertentu. Ada aspek eksotisme di situ, yang dalam konteks ilmu hayat, dekat dengan keberadaan hewan liar yang terancam punah.

Seandainya para pembaca pernah atau justru rajin mengunjungi studio seniman, yang tak melulu harus berada dalam ruangan, maka pembaca akan memerhatikan apa-apa yang membentuk diri dan karya mereka: sketsa-sketsa, catatan tulisan tangan, perkakas, buku-buku, juga sisi dirinya di luar dunia artistik atau profesi yang meresap ke udara studio itu. Meskipun menyenangkan untuk melihat seniman bekerja, atau bertanya-tanya padanya di tempat, penting juga untuk mengalami studio saat seniman tidak bekerja, dan membiarkan objek dan suasana yang berbicara. Kita lihat ada karya yang sudah dipamerkan, akan dipamerkan, tapi ada juga yang tak akan dipamerkan. Kita memahami, studio merupakan perpanjangan ruang dalam pikiran si seniman. Dan beruntunglah kita, beberapa karya di *Habitudes* baru dipamerkan untuk pertama kalinya setelah sekian lama menghuni studionya.

Saya punya pengalaman mengunjungi studio keempat seniman kita di *Habitudes*. Saya terkesima, studio-studio keempat seniman itu berjarak beberapa langkah dari ruang tamu, atau kamar tidur, atau bahkan dapur di tempat mereka tinggal. Artinya, kehidupan berstudio dekat dengan kesehariannya—bukan berarti mereka harus menjadi seniman *die-hard*. Dan karya-karya *Habitudes* lahir dari dan dalam situasi habitat seperti itu. Kecuali yang pernah mereka pameran sebelumnya, sejauh pemahaman saya, sebagian besar karya di *Habitudes* tak diciptakan untuk memenuhi proyek atau komisi khusus, dan karenanya, mencerminkan kehidupan artistik keempat seniman dalam kesehariannya secara hampir-aktual, jika bukan sepenuhnya, di mana kegiatan membuat karya adalah bagian dari kehidupannya, di mana mereka membentuk dan dibentuk oleh habitusnya.



Ella Wijt Having spent extensive time in Singapore and the United States, mixed-media artist Ella Wijt creates artwork in a large range of mediums including painting, installation, and sculpture. Her works depict a space between differing worlds, cultures and mythologies, one that lacks a defined identity. To Ella, depicting a state of transience echoes her experience of constantly moving across different environments. Her work exude intimacy. They allow her to express the abstractions and complexities of her life.

Ella's last solo exhibition was at RUBANAH Underground Hub, entitled *The Big Spill* (2022). She was the Artist-in-Residence at Horranggasy Creative Studio (2023) and The Langkawi International Marble Art Camp (2022). She has also participated in various group exhibitions such as *That's Cute* (A+, Kuala Lumpur, 2023), and *Terrain Biennial* (with Kurt D. Peterson, Chicago, 2023).



Cinanti Astria Johansjah use art as a medium to study, rethink and order fragments of life. Keni, as they are known, graduated from the Graphic Design School of the Bandung Institute of Technology, often includes portraits of themselves as a woman accompanied by various animals. They use their work to question and mix various human attitudes and values with those of animals.

Their works have been exhibited in, amongst others, Valentine Willie Fine Arts, Kuala Lumpur; Lawangwangi Creative Space, Bandung; Mizuma Gallery, Singapore; ROH Projects, Jakarta; Selasar Sunaryo Art Space, Bandung; Galeri Nasional Indonesia; Biennale Jogja - Equator Series; Ace House Collective, Yogyakarta; RUBANAH Underground Hub, Jakarta.



Meliantha Muliawan (b. 1992, Indonesia) artistic practice is centered on her observation of domestic objects in her environment. Her interest is to understand the functions and roles of these objects in our daily lives, in relation to human behavior and the social situations we find ourselves in. Meliantha graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Art from Bandung Institute of Technology (2014).

In 2023, Meli was the Artist-in-Residence at the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Japan. She has won UOB Painting of the Year Indonesia 2021, and emerged as one of the top 3 finalists for Young Artist Award at ARTJOG 11 in 2018. Meli has exhibited both in solo and group exhibitions in Indonesia, Singapore and Melbourne, including *Tacit* (Artsphere, Jakarta, 2022), the Biennale Jogja Equator 5 2019, *Museum of Days* (Sullivan+Strumpf, Singapore, 2019), and *#Perempuan* (Space 28, VCA Performing Arts, Melbourne, 2019).



Yosefa Aulia was awarded a Bachelor of Art from the Bandung Institute of Technology in sculpture program in 2014.

Her explorations in drawings and installation consist of the visual embodiment of her never ending questions related to self and others, home and belongings, and the universal language about being human.



Ibrahim Soetomo (b. 1995, Indonesia) is a writer and art program manager. His writing work encompasses fiction, art review and research, editorial, and self-publishing. He writes in Indonesian and English. As a writer, Ibrahim strives to write concisely and accessibly without neglecting its fundamentals of beauty. Ibrahim writes reviews on contemporary art and artists in Indonesia. His current thesis is about the critic Dan Suwaryono and art criticism in 1950s Indonesia. His self-published book as part of Rumah Tangga's residency program, "Buku Biru" (2021), is a quiet and steady observation of spaces and days, drawn into the form of a single day's passing from sunrise to night. He also writes for commissions, including "Direktori: Indonesian Collective Map 2010 - 2020" (Whiteboard Journal & British Council, 2020) and "Amrus Natalnya: Memahat Bahtera Purba dan Pecinan Kota Tua" (Kemendikbudristek, 2021). Ibrahim is also a frequent contributor to Whiteboard Journal.

As an art manager, Ibrahim has four years of experience in producing contemporary art exhibitions as well as collective works in Jakarta and surrounding cities.





Colophon

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